CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1 1. A regional message server of a communication system, said regional message server

2 comprising:

3   a first connection for connecting to a first agency;

4   a second connection for connecting to a second agency;

5   a global directory; and

6   a central processing unit.

2. The regional message server in claim 1, wherein said first connection connects to a first

message switching unit in said first agency and said second connection connects to a second

message switching unit in said second agency.

3. The regional message server in claim 1, further comprising a translator, wherein said first

2 agency and said second agency operate under different addressing protocols and said translator

3 translates between said different addressing protocols.

1 4. The regional message server in claim 1, wherein said global directory maintains addresses

2 of units within said first agency and said second agency.

1   5.   The regional message server in claim 1, wherein said central processing unit changes an

2   address of a message received from said first agency into a format acceptable to said second

3   agency and forwards said message to said second agency.

1   6.   The regional message server in claim 1, wherein said first agency and said second agency

2   are provided access to said global directory to obtain addresses of units within said global

3   directory.

1   7.   The regional message server in claim 1, wherein said central processing unit produces a

2   report of active units in said first agency and said second agency.

1   8.   A communication system comprising:

2   a first-level regional server connected to a first agency and a second agency; and

3   a second-level regional server connected to a plurality of said first-level regional servers.

1   9.   The communication system in claim 8, wherein said second-level regional server

2   comprises:

3   a first connection for connecting to one first-level regional server;

4   a second connection for connecting to another first-level regional server;

5   a directory of regional servers; and

6   a central processing unit.

1   10.   The communication system in claim 9, wherein said directory of regional servers

2   maintains addresses of all regional servers serviced by said communication system.

1   11.   The communication system in claim 9, wherein said central processing unit forwards said

2   message from one first-level regional server to one or more second-level regional servers.

1   12.   A method of transferring messages between a first agency and a second agency, said

2   method comprising:

3   transferring a message from a sending unit in said first agency to a first message

4   switching unit within said first agency;

5   transferring said message from said first message switching unit to a regional message

6   server;

7   altering, by said regional message server, an address of said message;

8   transferring said message from said regional message server to a second message

9   switching unit in said second agency; and

10   transferring said message from said second message switching unit to a destination unit in

11 said second agency.

1   13.   The method in claim 12, further comprising translating, by said regional message server,

2   said message from an addressing protocol used by said first agency to a protocol used by said

3   second agency.

1   14.   The method in claim 12, further comprising maintaining a global directory having

2   addresses of units within said first agency and said second agency.

1   15.   The method in claim 14, further comprising providing said first agency and said second

2   agency access to said global directory to obtain addresses of units within said global directory.

1   16.   The method in claim 12, further comprising producing a report of active units in said first

2   agency and said second agency.

1   17.   A method of transferring messages between a first agency and a second agency, said

2   method comprising:

3   transferring a message from a sending unit in said first agency to a first message

4   switching unit within said first agency;

5   transferring said message from said first message switching unit to a first regional

6   message server;

7   transferring said message from said first regional message server to a second-level

8   regional message server;

9   transferring said message from said second-level regional message server to a second

10   regional message server;

11   altering, by said second regional message server, an address of said message;

12   transferring said message from said second regional message server to a second message

13   switching unit in said second agency; and

14   transferring said message from said second message switching unit to a destination unit in

15   said second agency.

1   18.   The method in claim 17, further comprising translating, by one of said first regional

2   message server and said second regional message server, said message from an addressing

3   protocol used by said first agency to a protocol used by said second agency.

1   19.   The method in claim 17, further comprising maintaining a global directory having

2   addresses of units within said first agency and said second agency.

     20.   The method in claim 19, further comprising providing said first agency and said second

     agency access to said global directory to obtain addresses of units within said global directory.

     21.   The method in claim 17, further comprising producing a report of active units in said first

     agency and said second agency.